JOHN BURT

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CHAPTER XXIV—Continued.

They strolled into the conservatory. For the first time he was alone with Jessie Carden, and a sense of exalted happiness surged over him.

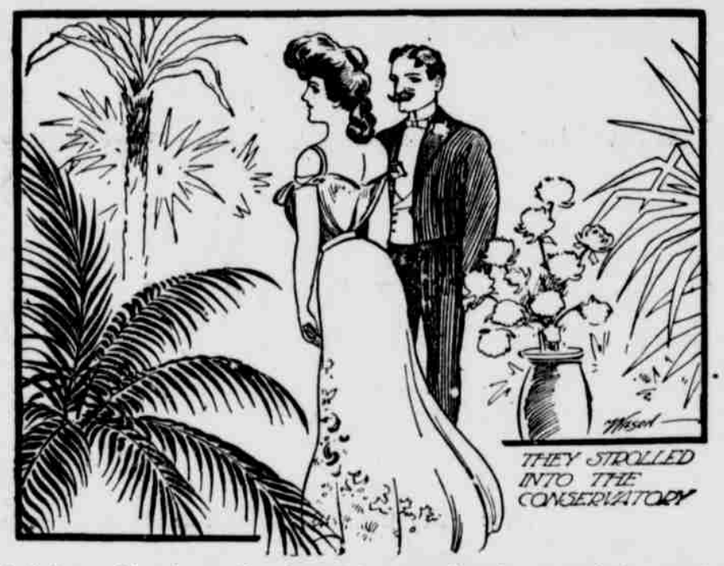
Blake had formulated no plan of campaign for the conquest of Jessie Carden. The light of her eyes and the radiance of her beauty were to him as ignes fatui, and drew him on.

He talked of California and of Rocky Woods, but his eyes spoke love and his deep rich voice was tender. Fair woman is seldom blind to the spell cast by her charms, and it is probable that Jessie was aware of Blake's admiration; but she neither recognized nor took advantage of it.

Though he knew that the odds were overwhelmingly against him, and that one false step meant irretrievable defeat, he shut his eyes to the perils which encompassed him. He knew the risk he ran in appearing in public with Jessie Carden, but he did not hesitate to secure a box for the Booth performance.

There were four in the theater party—the general and Edith, Blake and Jessie Carden. Blake escorted Jessie to the front of the box and took his place by her side. The boxes were thronged with fair women, but all eyes were turned on Jessie Carden and her handsome escort. She had been absent from New York for two years, and only a few recognized her. James Blake was even less known, though his name had been made familiar by the name of Wall street achievements with which he was publicly identified.

The first act was nearly over when a thick-set young man, with a soft, florid face, sauntered into the box directly across the orchestra from Blake and Jessie. Both recognized the newcomer as Arthur Morris, and both felt a secret joy that he was present. Like a flash the thought came to Blake that, by means of his



THEY STROLLED INTO THE CONSERVATORY

rival, he could enhance the chances of a speedy success with the woman by his side.

"Do you notice the gentleman sitting alone in the box opposite?" he asked as the curtain fell.

"Yes," answered Jessie, raising her eyes and looking at Blake with a puzzled smile. "Why do you ask?"

"That's Arthur Morris, the banker. Would you like to meet him?"

"I shall be delighted!" exclaimed Jessie, who could not resist the temptation.

At that instant Morris directed his opera-glass for the first time at the Blake box. The smile of joy when he recognized Jessie turned to one of blank amazement when he saw James Blake. In response to Blake's signal the dazed Morris was picking his way through the crush. Blake led Jessie to the rear of the box.

"Miss Carden, permit me to present my friend, Mr. Arthur Morris."

Jessie smiled and offered her hand.

"I'm glad to meet any friend of Mr. Blake's," she said.

"By Jove, old man, this is a joke on you, or me—or both of us!" stammered Morris. "Charmed to meet you again, Miss Carden! How are you, General Carden? This is a good one on you, Blake! I've been acquainted with Miss Carden for years—five years, is it not, Miss Carden?"

Jessie's laughing eyes admitted the truth and Blake looked properly confused.

"I shall have to forgive you," Blake said to Jessie, "but you are taking an unfair advantage of a wild Westerner."

"You have the reputation of being lucky," said Morris, laying his hand familiarly on Blake's shoulder, "but I didn't know that your good fortune extended to an acquaintance with Miss Carden."

There was a shade of insolence in his tone, and an air which did not escape any of his three listeners. It hinted that he was General Carden's employer; that the latter was under obligations to him, and that Jessie was pledged to pay the debt. But Blake was a good actor in the little comedy between the acts. He held the key to the solution. Of all the figures in this complicated drama, he alone knew the motives which influenced the other players.

"I might say the same to you, my dear Morris," said Blake with airy confidence. "Were it in good form I would willingly wager a supper that I met Miss Carden before you did. Have I your permission, Miss Carden, to challenge Mr. Morris to such a wager?"

"You have," laughed Jessie.

General Carden's face was a study, but Morris was too dumfounded to notice it. Blake's words had reminded him of the night he first met the young magnate from California. He had only one card to play.

"I accept your wager," he said.

"When I was a boy I lived in Rocky Woods," began Blake. "Miss Carden probably has told you that she spent the summers with Mr. and Mrs. Bishop, who still have a country place near there. Miss Carden was then a little girl, but I remember her distinctly. That's all. If you demand evidence, I have not the slightest doubt that Miss Carden or the general will furnish it."

To Jessie's amusement and General Carden's relief Morris declared that he did not doubt Blake's word. The fires of jealousy burned fiercely in him, but he concealed his rage.

"I admit myself done, old chap," he declared. "We shall have a jolly dinner in honor of my defeat. Say Tuesday, at Sherry's? Will that be convenient, Miss Carden? Good! There goes the curtain."

Morris smiled gaily and excused himself, and Blake and Jessie resumed their places.

"You have a wonderful memory, Mr. Blake," said Jessie, behind her fan. "I could not help thinking, while you were enlightening Mr. Morris, that perhaps you had unconsciously confused your Rocky Mountain career with that of your boyhood friend, John Burt."

The smile on Blake's lips died and the color mounted to his temples.

"Perhaps—perhaps I did," he said, after an awkward pause. A thousand thoughts and fears came to him. He dared not lift his eyes for fear of encouraging the gaze of the man he had wronged. The voices on the stage sounded far away. Jessie's innocent words, "your boyhood friend, John Burt," had hurled him for the moment from the heaven of bliss to the nadir of remorse. Opportunely for his confusion, Edith called Jessie's attention to some trifling matter, and in the interval he regained his composure.

The play ended, and Arthur Morris again joined the Blake party as they waited for the crowd to leave. He declined Blake's invitation to supper, pleading a previous engagement.

"I am chaperoning the governor," he laughed, pointing to his father, whose ponderous bulk blocked an adjacent aisle. "By the way, Blake, did you follow my tip on L. & O.? Bought a little, did you? That's right; keep on buying it. It's going up, as I said it would. You needn't be afraid of it."

CHAPTER XXV.

The Mantle of Charity.

It was late on Sunday morning when Blake awoke. For years he and John had dined at four o'clock on Sundays, and they had continued the custom in New York. Blake looked forward to what had ever been a pleasure, with an aversion not unmixd with fear.

He rang a bell and his valet responded.

"Mr. Burton will dine with me at four o'clock," he said. "Until he leaves I'm not at home to anyone. Make no mistake about this, Roberts. I want a light breakfast."

Blake carelessly glanced over a newspaper. With a yawn he was about to lay the paper aside, when he noticed a headline descriptive of the Booth performance of the preceding evening. It was a long article, but Blake was so engrossed in its reading that he paid no attention to the valet's announcement that his bath was ready.

To the abject astonishment of that trained and sedate servant, Blake gave a cry of terror and sprang from his couch, upsetting a small table as he rushed towards the window.

In the full flood of light he again read a paragraph which had frozen the blood in his veins. It was as follows:

"Among the box-holders at this notable performance was James Blake, the famous Wall street operator and financier, whose recent advent in New York was signalized by a market movement not yet forgotten. Mr. Blake's guests were General Marshall Carden, Miss Jessie Carden and Miss Edith Hancock, of Cohasset, Massachusetts. Miss Carden returned a week ago from a two years' sojourn abroad, where her musical and artistic talents attracted nearly as much attention as her rare beauty."

"My God! this is awful—awful—awful!" groaned Blake. "Get out of here!" he shouted to his man. "What the devil do you mean, standing there gaping at me? Bring me a glass of brandy, and be quick about it!"

He hurled the paper from him and sank back into a chair.

The door bell rang, and at the sound every nerve tingled with terror. Was it John Burt? James Blake was not a coward—as he had proved a score of times when his mettle was put to the test—but from the moment he went down to defeat beneath sturdy blows he had respected his boyhood conqueror.

The valet opened the door and Blake heard the piping voice of a telegraph messenger. He drew a long breath and tore open the envelope. The message was from John Hawkins, and stated that he would arrive in New York on the following morning.

The little clock spasmodically jingled the hour of noon. In four short hours he would face John Burt! He drank the brandy at a gulp, and plunged into a cool bath. He glared at the tempting breakfast, but could not taste it.

"Take that stuff away and bring me more brandy," he ordered.

Again he read the dreaded paragraph. It had a fascination he could not resist. He sent for all the Sunday journals and eagerly scanned them for mention of the theater party, but to his great relief found that it appeared only in the one paper. Again he helped himself to the brandy.

"Come to think of it, John don't read that cursed paper!" he exclaimed half aloud. "It's only an accident that I happened to see it. If I hadn't been there last night I never would have glanced below the headline. What chance is there for John to see it? Not one in a million!"

He paced up and down the room, and paused to survey his reflection in a mirror. His face was drawn, and dark circles showed under his eyes. The decanter was his only friend. The grave face of the valet did not disclose the astonishment he felt over the conduct of his employer. Blake was almost abstemious in his habits, and his sideboard was more of an ornament than a utility. In this he had wisely patterned himself after John Burt.

"Shall I serve breakfast now, sir?" asked Roberts.

Blake answered with a sullen negative and tossed off his fourth brandy. It sounded a new note in the scale of stimulation.

"I don't see why I should go into such a beastly funk over this affair!" he muttered. "It's no crime to be in love with a woman. She doesn't belong to him. They're not even engaged. Suppose he does love her? So do I. What if he did meet her first? A woman is not something to be discovered and pre-empted like a gold mine."

As the hours sped by and the dark red line in the decanter dropped lower and lower, Blake's courage aroused to such a pitch that he welcomed the coming of John Burt.

"By God, we'll settle this matter now and here!" he exclaimed as he lurched unsteadily about the room. "John Burt nor any other man shall stand between me and Jessie Carden! I'll meet him face to face! I'll——"

The hall bell rang with that clear precision which comes from the pressure of an insistent hand. At the same instant the little clock hammered the hour of four.

(To be continued.)

Record Locomotive Building.

The Stratford works of the Great Eastern Railway, in England, have the record of a locomotive engine built in ten hours—a large freighter with a tender. Before the actual construction was begun the various parts were laid close at hand, ready for fitting together. The workmen began early in the morning and continued until the breakfast bell rang. Then the partly-built engine was photographed. After a half hour's rest the workmen returned to the task and continued till the dinner hour, when another photograph was taken. Thus the work proceeded till the engine was completed, with the exception of a coat of paint. This was quickly laid on by a spraying machine, and in less than half an hour was perfectly dry. The locomotive was then sent on a trial journey a few miles up the line and all proved satisfactory, so it was sent with a baggage train. It has been in active service ever since.

A Prophet Without Honor.

The late Hugh Stowell Scott, famous as Henry Seton Merriman, author of "The Sowers," "The Vultures" and other novels, was a man of extraordinary reserve and self-command. The following story is told of him:

His father, who was a director of the London Graphic, had an unaccountable objection to his son's following a literary career, and tried to make a business man of him. His son wrote in secret under a pseudonym, and, although his work was successful, he never betrayed his literary identity to his father.

On one occasion his father placed before him one of the young author's own stories, saying, "Now, if you could write a book like this, it would be another thing altogether."

And still the son kept silence.—Harper's.

Romance in a "Graft"

The best grafts in the world are built up on copy-book maxims and psalms and proverbs and Esau's fables. They sem to kind of hit off human nature. Our peaceful little swindle was constructed on the old saying: "The whole push loves a lover."

One evening Buck and Miss Malloy drives up like blazes in a buggy to a farmer's door. She is pale but affectionate, clinging to his arm—always clinging to his arm. Any one can see she is a peach and of the cling variety. They claim they are eloping for to be married on account of cruel parents. They ask where they can find a preacher. Farmer says: "B'gum, there ain't any nigher than Rev. Abels, four mile mile over on Caney Creek." Farmeress wipes her hand on her apron and rubbers through her specs.

Then lo, and look ye! Up the road from the other way jogs Parleyvoo Pickens in a gig, dressed in black, white necktie, long face, sniffing his nose, emitting a spurious kind of noise resembling the long meter doxology.

"B'jinks!" says farmer, "if thar ain't a preacher now!"

It transpires that I am Rev. Abijah Green, traveling over to Little Bethel schoolhouse for to preach next Sunday.

The young folks will have it they must be married, for pa is pursuing them with the plow mules and the buckboard. So Rev. Green, after hesitations, marries 'em in farmer's parlor. And farmer grins, and has in the cider, and says "B'gum!" and farmeress sniffles a bit and pats the bride on the shoulder. And Parleyvoo Pickens, the wrong reverend, writes out a marriage certificate, and farmer and farmeress sign it as witnesses. And the parties of the first, second and third part gets in their vehicles and rides away. Oh, that was an idyllic graft! True love and the lowing kine and the sun shining on the red barns—it certainly had all other impostures I know about beat to a batter.

I suppose I happened along in time to marry Buck and Miss Maloney at about twenty farmhouses. I hated to think how the romance was going to fade later on when all them marriage certificates turned up in banks where we'd discounted 'em, and the farmers had to pay them notes of hand they'd signed running from $300 to $500.—McClure's Magazine.

Damage by Forest Fires

One of the great forest fires was the Miramichi fire of 1825. It began its greatest destruction about 1 o'clock in the afternoon of Oct. 7 at a place about sixty miles above the town of Newcastle, on the Miramichi river, in New Brunswick. Before 10 o'clock at night it was twenty miles below Newcastle. In nine hours it had destroyed a belt of forest eighty miles long and twenty-five miles wide. Over more than 2,500,000 acres almost every living thing was killed. Even the fish were afterward found dead in heaps along the river banks. Five hundred and ninety buildings were burned and a number of towns, including Newcastle, Chatham and Douglastown, were destroyed. One hundred and sixty persons perished and nearly 1,000 head of stock.

Peshtigo's fire of October, 1871, was still more severe than the Miramichi. It covered an area of over 2,000 square miles in Wisconsin and involved a loss in timber and other property of many millions of dollars. Between 1,200 and 1,500 persons perished, including nearly half the population of Peshtigo, at that time a town of 2,000 inhabitants. Other fires of about the same time were most destructive in Michigan. A strip of about forty miles wide and 180 miles long, extending across the central part of the state from Lake Michigan to Lake Huron, was devastated. The estimated loss in timber was about 4,000,000,000 feet board measure and in money over $10,000,000. Several hundred persons perished.

A destructive fire of more recent years was that which started near Hinckley, Minn., Sept. 1, 1894. While the area burned over was less than in some other great fires, the loss of life and property was very heavy. Hinckley and six other towns were destroyed, about 500 lives were lost, more than 2,000 persons were left destitute and the estimated loss in property of various kinds was $25,000,000. Except for the heroic conduct of locomotive engineers and other railroad men the loss of life would have been far greater.

Just a Wild Flower

It lay in the streets of the city—a wild flower from the fields,
Trampled by hurrying human feet, beaten and crushed and alone,
Till a ragged child—the kind of a child the slum of the city yields,
Seized it with eager fingers and carried it swiftly home.

Home? Can a wretched basement be worthy of such a name?
Home—where a drunken father but adds to poverty's shame?
But 'twas home to the ragged little girl, for wasn't her mother there?
Toiling all day at the steaming tubs, weary and full of care?

She held up the wilted blossom: "See, mammy, it's mine to keep!
I found it up on the corner—O mammy, ain't it sweet?
An' did you have this very kind when you was little like me
And lived 'way off in the country? How beautiful that must be?

"Darlin',"—the mother dried her hands and took the faded flower;
"It's a daisy from some far meadow—O, many and many an hour
Did I wander the sweet fields over and gather the pretty things;
Ah, me! Ah, me! It was long ago, but how their memory clings!"

It was only a wilted daisy dropped in a city street,
But it lay, that night, in the little hand, while dreams surpassing sweet
Flitted, like gay-winged butterflies, through the little sleeper's mind—
Dreams of the dear, green country she had always longed to find.

O, children who dwell in the midst of fields where the wild flowers grow so sweet,
Think of the child whose only field is the stifling city street!
Gather and send the daisies fair to the dreary tenement place,
Where little hearts are hungering for the wild flowers dainty grace.

It is little to do, but the blessing that goes with the gift you send
Will brighten and gladden a little life and a precious joy will lend
To the cheerless home, to the dreary child, to the mother's life of woe,
For it carries a breath from the beautiful fields where the daisies love to grow.

—Los Angeles Times.

Actor's Youth Well Kept

The mysterious faculty of keeping a youthful appearance well into the meridian of life which so many actresses and actors possess received a fresh illustration the other day. Frank Deshon, who a generation or more ago used to play the part of the old miser in "The Chimes of Normandy," has come in from a season on the road with a musical comedy company, and he told on the Rialto the incident which showed how lightly his years sit on him.

"I was playing in 'The Princess Chic,'" he said, "and during a semi-dark scene I had a sort of wrestling bout with another character. We were supposed to receive what light there was, and it was rather essential that we did receive it, for the business was pretty strenuous, and in the dark one of us might have been injured. But one night, just as the scene got fully under way, the light man switched the glim upon the leading woman and kept it on her till the scene was over. I was good and angry, and made no bones of saying so; in fact, I called the light man a blooming incompetent. What was my astonishment to hear him muttering to one of his companions later:

"'Ump, calls me a bloomin' incompetent, does he? I'll have him know I worked the lights for his father when he played old Gaspard in 'The Chimes of Normandy,' and he never made no kick. His father was a real actor, too.'

"I had to find what compliment I could in his tremendous emphasis on 'father.'"—New York Times.

Speed of the Salmon

Just how fast salmon can travel has never been proved. Owners of weirs say that a healthy salmon can swim faster than a torpedo boat. Here is some evidence on the subject:

Frank Arey of Winterport, Me., went fishing the other day at the pool below Bangor Dam. He landed two small salmon on the flood tide. About 11:30 a. m. he struck a big one, which caused his rod to bend until it was perilously near the breaking point. Then the salmon darted under the boat, and catching the line against the keel, severed the fly and leader from the silk string and escaped.

Disgusted with his luck, the young man landed and went to Bangor at 11:40, remaining in the city until the afternoon train took him home. His father met him at the station saying:

"I have got your fly and leader all right, Frank. I found them in the jaw of a twenty-six pound salmon which I took from the weir at high tide today. It was just 12:10 when I dipped the fish from the weir into my punt. What time did you lose your rig?"

On comparing watches, father and son learned that the fish had gone from a mile above Bangor to Bucksport Center, a distance of thirteen miles, inside of half an hour. The tide was flowing up river at the time at the rate of three or four miles an hour. After making due allowance for every condition, it was proved that the salmon had covered the distance at the rate of about twenty-eight miles an hour.—New York Sun.

Making Sweet Scents.

The oils of roses, lavender, orange blossoms and many others are obtained by distilling the flowers in water. The oils rise with the steam and float on the top of the water, which presently condenses in the receiver. Thus the pure oil is extracted, but the water remaining, impregnated with minute particles of the oil, retains a delightful fragrance, and, under such names as rose water and lavender water, is placed upon the market as perfumes for the toilet.

Law Against Football.

On the statute book of Scotland is still an act passed in 1424, ordering that "na man play at futeball," because it is "esteemed to be unprofitable sport for the common gude of the realme and defence thereof." There is also a statute against alien immigration, passed in 1426, and authorizing "all his majesty's good subjects" to "take, apprehend, imprison and execute to death the said Egiptians (Gypsies), either men or women."

Mystery of the Rain Tree.

The mystery of the rain tree of the Canaries is a cloud that hovers about it constantly; this is condensed to water, which saturates the leaves and, falling from them in constant drops, keeps the cisterns which are in excavation beneath them always full of water.